



## Partnering With Community Health Centers to Control High Blood Pressure

### Public Health Problem

High blood pressure is a major modifiable risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Although high blood pressure is controllable and detectable, it is a significant problem in the United States, with over 50 million adults suffering from high blood pressure. One in every four adults has high blood pressure and African Americans are at even greater risk, with one in every three adults suffering from high blood pressure.

### Evidence That Prevention Works

Altering one's lifestyle by increasing physical activity, reducing dietary salt intake, or taking blood pressure medication has been proven effective in lowering blood pressure. A 5 mm Hg reduction in diastolic blood pressure corresponds to a 21% decrease in coronary heart disease risk. Similarly, illness and death from heart disease and stroke can be reduced when diastolic or systolic blood pressure levels are within the normal range.

### Program Example

The Virginia Cardiovascular Health Program supports system enhancements to track blood pressure testing and outcomes at 17 community health centers by developing a database and supporting data entry for high blood pressure patient chart reviews. Patients previously diagnosed with high blood pressure were the focus of the chart reviews. Based on the clinical guidelines adapted from the *Sixth Report of the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure (JNC VI)*, the chart reviews determine whether physicians are adhering to the guidelines for treating patients and whether their high blood pressure is under control. The Virginia Cardiovascular Health Program provides training for community health center practitioners and staff. The training sessions focus on implementing the guidelines for prevention, treatment, and control of high blood pressure. In addition to the training, the Virginia Cardiovascular Health Program is developing a video to be distributed to community health centers for on-site training to improve practitioners' ability to take accurate blood pressure measurements.

### Implications

This program demonstrates that states should partner with health care organizations, especially community health centers that serve low-income and often high-risk patients, to promote system enhancements, such as providing education and training about *JNC VI* guidelines and *Healthy People 2010* objectives.